



## Report from Olympia

### **Committees & Appointments:**

Education

Natural Resources (vice chair)

Transportation

Joint Legislative Audit &  
Review Committee (JLARC)

Legislative Ethics Board

Legislative Oversight Committee  
on Ferry Maintenance

Transportation Permit Efficiency  
and Accountability Committee

Puget Sound Council

Secretary of State's Election

Reform Advisory Committee



**State Representative**

# Phil Rockefeller

**23rd Legislative District**

Dear Friends:

Like many of my fellow legislators, I had a post-session newsletter in the final stages of preparation when terrorists attacked the United States, killing thousands of innocent people and plunging America into war. My decision to suspend the mailing means this report on the 2001 legislative session is relatively late in reaching you, for which I apologize.

I feel it was right to postpone, however. The September 11 attacks were so massive and so tragic — and so heartbreaking — that everything else seemed to pale in significance. But now, as the weeks and months go by, and our national grief turns to resolve, I believe it is time to acknowledge and celebrate those things that make America the great nation that it is.

Among those things is our ongoing successful experiment in self-government. During the 2001 session, the Washington State Legislature had some hits, and some misses. The bitter partisanship exhibited by some lawmakers made a number of key issues, notably our transportation crisis, seem almost unsolvable. Yet our divided Legislature could, and did, unite to make real progress in other crucial areas such as energy and education.

This ability to unite for the greater good is going to be a necessity in the 2002 session, and for years to come. Neither Democrats nor Republicans, acting unilaterally, can accomplish the important things we must do.

What are those things? I believe our goals must be:

- to focus on safety and security within our communities;
- to work for a strong economy by rebuilding confidence and rebuilding our job base;
- to help families whose dreams are shattered by the economic downturn;
- to support our military friends and neighbors who are called to defend the American homeland;
- to ensure the security of our transportation system; and
- to get on with the task of creating a transportation network that can serve as the foundation for our economic recovery.

Political differences will never go away. That's an inherent part of our system, and I wouldn't have it any other way. But now, more than ever, I hope we can rise above those differences and work together for one Washington ... and for one America.

Sincerely,

*Phil Rockefeller*  
Phil Rockefeller

## **Energy problems challenge Washington**

Depending on who's talking, the energy problems that hit Washington state this past fall and winter can be blamed on California's experiment in deregulation ... on our drought ... on having too few generating plants ... or on federal decisions.



While it can be comforting to pretend there are simple answers to complex questions, I think the answer is that all these, and more, combined to drive up our historically affordable energy prices. But our job in Olympia was not to place blame, but to address the energy problems that affected every family and business in the state.

As mentioned earlier, this is one of the areas in which legislators were wise enough to set aside their political differences to work together. And, as so often happens when we *do* choose to work together, we created a win-win solution.

The omnibus energy package we produced, House Bill 2247, will:

- ✓ Diversify energy supplies;
- ✓ Bring powerplants on line more quickly;
- ✓ Help older plants produce more energy without producing more air pollution by providing tax incentives for voluntary pollution control.
- ✓ Help aluminum companies and other big energy users build their own generating plants;
- ✓ Make government agencies more energy-efficient; and
- ✓ Provide struggling families with millions of dollars in emergency energy assistance.

That last item — financial aid to help families keep the lights on — was the goal of one of the first bills I sponsored this session. That bill, HB 1443, was later rolled into the omnibus energy package. I'm proud that the work we did will provide up to \$5 million over the next two years to folks who have been hardest hit by rising energy bills.

## **Education — our "paramount duty"**

Although our state budget as a whole is suffering in the wake of the September 11 attacks, the document that we passed this earlier this year is the best for education in decades. It emphasizes improving teaching and leadership in schools, and continues education reform. It also addresses the voter-approved Initiatives 728 and 732.

- Per pupil spending rises from \$5,009 to \$5,315 in 2002, then to \$5,484 in 2003.
- \$393.3 million for the new Student Achievement Program.
- \$318.4 million for K-12 state-funded staff cost-of-living increases over the next two years.
- \$82.5 million to continue the class-size reduction and extended learning components of the Better Schools Fund.
- \$2.8 million in focused assistance for consistently low-performing schools.
- \$6.6 million for increased school safety, including \$500,000 to develop a plan to prevent school bullying and harassment.

I was disappointed that the Legislature wasn't able to provide raises for all teachers — although it must be remembered that the 1999-2000 Legislature granted teachers the most significant salary increase in state history. I was also disappointed when the House and Senate couldn't agree on a school accountability bill. But all things considered, this is a great budget for our kids and educators alike.

I will work hard to protect these gains when the Legislature begins revising the budget in light of our current economic turmoil.

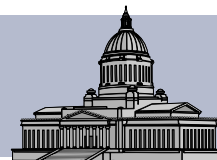


## **A Healthy Puget Sound**

Since last spring it has been my privilege to serve on the Puget Sound Council, which is one of the key groups responsible for protecting and restoring Puget Sound. The Council includes three other legislators, as well as members representing agriculture, business, cities, counties, the environmental community, the shellfish industry and tribal governments.

Council members help set priorities for projects and, more important, track the progress of state and local agencies charged with implementing the state's Puget Sound Water Quality Action Plan. The goal we all share is a healthy Puget Sound, with unequaled recreational opportunities as well as ample, balanced populations of indigenous shellfish, fish and wildlife. The appointment dovetails well with my duties as vice chair of the House Natural Resources Committee, and I will keep you posted on our activities.

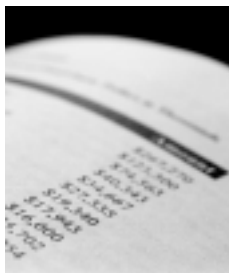
# Report From Olympia



## Washington's Budget Challenge

Along with practically every other state, and the nation as a whole, Washington state is facing serious budget challenges. A state revenue forecast issued on September 10 projected a revenue shortage of about \$100 million (out of a total budget of \$22.8 billion). That dip in revenues was multiplied many times over by the effects of the September 11 terrorist attacks and subsequent events; at this time (early November), estimates put the shortfall at as much as \$1 billion.

The six largest state agencies under the direction of the governor have been directed to propose budget cuts of 15 percent each. These agencies include the departments of Social & Health Services, Corrections, Community, Trade and Economic Development, Health, Ecology, and Fish and Wildlife.



**Without question, cuts of this magnitude would have a real effect on services for seniors, the disabled, health care programs, parks, and other important state services. It is our goal to trim this budget in a way that does not harm our citizens, jeopardize public safety, or worsen our economic condition. I firmly believe we must address these budget problems while helping workers and communities hurt by the economic downturn, with spending reductions and efficiency reforms – and without raising taxes.**

One consolation in all this is the realization that it could have been worse. House Democrats, and Democrats and Republicans in the Senate, set a hard limit on spending when the state's operating budget was written last summer. House Republicans, however, attempted several dozen times to amend the budget upwards, repeatedly voting as a bloc for measures that would have put the state in a financial hole nearly half a billion dollars deeper than the one we're now in. Although many of these amendments were for worthwhile causes, they were more than an already-strained budget could afford, and each was voted down.

Ironically, many of those same lawmakers who wanted to spend that extra \$500 million are now the most vocal critics of our no-new-taxes budget that was considered by most observers to be both responsive and responsible. This inconsistency might have the potential to be amusing, if the situation our state faces were not so serious.

The watchwords of the coming session will be efficiency, focus, and accountability. I urge you to offer me your advice and share with me your concerns as I prepare to return to Olympia. The decisions that we will have the opportunity to make during our short (60 days) 2002 session will be crucial in setting the course of our state for years to come.

## Fixing the transportation mess

"There's no Democratic or Republican way to clean the streets." That straightforward statement by a former mayor of New York City captures the philosophy that, for decades, prevailed in Washington transportation matters. Our state's infrastructure has always taken precedence over partisan posturing and politicking – until recently. As we've seen here during the last few years, the politics of division can infect practically any policy area, and one result is that our freedom to move about easily, as well as the economy of the entire state, have been put at risk.

The Blue Ribbon Commission on Transportation — a bipartisan group of civic and business leaders from across the state — studied our transportation system and needs for almost two years. The Commission made a set of recommendations on what was needed to get Washington moving again. The recommendations ranged from improving efficiencies to increasing the gas tax to letting regions of the state fund and solve their own worst problems.

Putting first things first, my fellow members of the House Transportation Committee and I began by tackling the question of increased efficiencies. As a result, two very significant reforms — the "design-build" law and a permit-streamlining measure — are now the law of the land. (Not coincidentally, I have accepted an invitation to serve on the newly created Transportation Permit Efficiency and Accountability Committee. There are already too many "roadblocks" to transportation progress; any time we can eliminate unnecessary delays, we owe it to ourselves to do so.)

When it came to the Commission's other recommendations, House Democrats, Senate Democrats, and Senate Republicans

*(Transportation continued on back page)*



# State Representative Phil Rockefeller

# 23rd District

## Transportation cont'd

were prepared to take the hard votes to get Washington moving again. Unfortunately, the 49-49 tie in the House allowed Republican leaders put a stick in the legislative spokes. That group alone declined to offer any solution to our state's major infrastructure investment needs, for ferries as well as other modes of transportation. Instead of a plan to move forward, our only alternative was to pass a "keep up," or "current law," budget.

The people of our state deserve better, and all of us who depend on fast, accessible and affordable ferry service would like to end the uncertainty that has plagued ferry funding ever since Initiative 695 passed a few years ago. Senator Betty Sheldon and I met with Governor Locke early last session to advocate for the people, businesses and communities of Kitsap County, and I commend him for his help in assuring that service will continue uninterrupted while we seek a long-term, permanent funding solution for our ferry system.

One final note: I was disappointed that the Legislature approved Senate Bill 6181, despite my "No" vote and the opposition of virtually every other legislator representing ferry-dependent West Sound communities. That bill allows ferry fares to rise faster than the maximum rate established by Initiative 601. This places an unfair burden on ferry users, compared to other forms of transportation. If we're going to pay higher fares, we deserve better service, and I will continue to work for just that.

## United We Stand

The U.S.S. Carl Vinson (pictured) and U.S.S. Sacramento, based in Bremerton, are protecting our country in Operation Enduring Freedom. Please support the men and women who defend our way of life.



## Keeping in Touch

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